

WHO WE ARE!

WE HOPE YOU'RE INTERESTED in knowing who we are, so here's a short description of the group that put together THE KITE and why. For basics, we are three women and four men, all white, from Vancouver. Coming off the high energy of the Wood-Hoon trial in early '79 (see article on self-defense), we decided to work on this paper because we felt our time and energy could be spent usefully by helping to develop communication about the prison movement.

We began by soliciting and collecting information on what is happening in the prison movement generally, with the hope of producing a paper which would present a fairly coherent picture of where prison work is at today. We hope that this overview of the many fronts people are working on in the prison movement will give us all a better sense of identity and unity, as we are all interdependent.

No one in our group has been in prison, however, we have all been involved in struggling against prisons - through visiting, writing letters, doing leaflets and articles, working on campaigns, demonstrating, and simply by rapping. Presently we are all members of the Solitary Confinement Abolition Project. We see visiting prisoners, and them developing outside political contacts, as a basic requirement of prison organizing because in this way the secrecy about what's happening inside prisons can be broken. We recognize that the solidarity of prisoners and their organizations inside is the real key to building a strong prison movement.

As individuals and activists we are anti-authoritarian. All of us see prison work as a logical and necessary part of our wider political activities. We are not prison reformists, and intend to abolish more than prisons. We hope this paper changes hands many times and helps everyone to organize and grow.

If you want to drop us a line about THE KITE or prison work our address is: Solitary Confinement Abolition Project
P.O. Box 758, Station A,
Vancouver, B.C.



"Kite" is prison slang for an illegally-passed message or letter between prisoners or between inside and outside.

The Daily Battle

Summer '85

Free

1985: Who Needs Big Brother?

The book *1984* generally conjures up an image of a society whose population is constantly monitored by t.v. and other means. In fact, such treatment was extended in the story only to the upper 2% and the next 13% of the social pyramid, the Inner and Outer Parties. The proles, the remaining 85%, were dominated largely by being manipulated toward self-absorption. Such self-managed policing has in real life advanced to such a point that in the advanced industrial societies, blatant Big Brother control need only be applied sporadically.

Most of us are ground down by 40-plus hours a week of hard, mindless work plus commuting, and kept not too far from the edge of poverty, or even over. There is little time to figure things out, let alone plan a rebellion. As in the past, though, people might get sick of their situation. The mass-media culture steps in right here. The television and radio networks, newspaper, magazine and book publishers, and movie makers act to fill in whatever spare time remains after survival concerns are dealt with. Even more important, their one-way broadcasts define the nature of social life, thereby confining almost all social-critical activity to the pigeonhole of "politics".

Though the media in the U.S. are generally not officially regulated as to opinion, their range of views is kept narrow by market concerns. Media units are, after all, businesses that need to earn a profit; or like P.B.S., need to attract consistent corporate funding. They therefore do not question the very existence of global capitalism, which would mean questioning their own existence. They advocate only improved social management, the smoothing of rough spots in the operation of the capital accumulation machine. This in itself reinforces conformity, as people whose lives fall outside approved limits tend to feel out of touch with "reality", and drift back to the fold. Yet the manipulation goes much further.

It used to be that the media promoted the status quo and social passivity by singing uncritical acclaims of the American Way. This

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The Invisible People

The Invisibles. They huddle like bundles of living rags on the corners, under the bridges, hidden from the cops in Peoples' Park. Most of them have learned to avert their eyes from the well dressed, to be unseen.

They appeared in force on a grungy back street in deindustrialized west Berkeley. Self-organized and cooperative, methods forced on them by indifferent bureaucracies, they assert their simple right to live on the street. There's no room at the inn. Their place is the Rainbow Community.

Beginning on a block with several abandoned, City-owned houses, they posed no more danger than the threat of irony. "Hell I've lived on the street for five years" says a spunky resident. He said "problems" began

when people began organizing into communities. The problem was the threat of the tow truck, in effect, eviction by the city. The settlement remained at Fifth Street until the City convinced the residents to move to the dump. Some were already convinced. "He drove his big truck up to our car and parked it with the engine running and the exhaust blowing right into my face," said one woman. The driver reportedly pushed her down onto the street. Her husband later confronted the driver's boss, who bodily threw him out of the office.

Many believed they would be able to live at the dump for two years when they moved,

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The Final Solution - IMF Style

As the screws continue to tighten, worldwide austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) are reaching new levels of barbarism no one could have even imagined just a few years ago.

In debt-ridden, broke and starving Sudan, government measures which included an abrupt jump in the prices of food and gas led to several days of rioting and looting by dispossessed people and students. These events centered in Khartoum, the capital. The government responded by rounding up thousands of squatters and "aliens" in Khartoum and deporting them to "production sites" in the outer provinces. Concentration camps, anyone? This in turn has led to strikes by doctors and other professionals aimed at toppling the government.

Rumania's "socialist" regime has also adopted drastic measures in order to get help from the IMF in paying off its debt. These included major curtailment of home, hospital and school heating in order to save fuel for export, as well as to power factories making products for exporting. This, coupled with a harsh and long-lasting winter, has led to outright suffering, all in the name of financial

solvency. And Rumania's debt has been reduced only slightly at that.

Latin America is the global debt bomb's major fuse, with Brazil, Mexico and Argentina alone accounting for \$250 billion in outstanding debt. Contrary to what you might have heard, the problem has not gone away. During the last two months, the IMF has cut off Brazil and Argentina from its funding sources, because these two nation-states have failed to administer the measures they promised the Fund in return for its endorsement. IMF backing is necessary for almost all nations in order to receive international bank loans. Brazil's new administration is finding the government is even more broke than thought, due to underestimated expenses, 230% inflation and the failure of several big banks. Meanwhile, Argentina is facing 700+ % inflation.

Next door in Bolivia, a general strike started in mid-March, and was still on as of early April. The strikers, many of whom camped out in the streets of the capital city La Paz, were demanding, among other things, a freeze on foreign debt payments. If enacted, this would be the first formal moratorium in

the current crisis. Bank workers who occupied their workplaces attempted to use bank funds to pay strikers, but were foiled by the army. Inflation, which last year stood at 2700%, is headed toward 50,000%.

Even Nicaragua, the current darling of the American left, has also taken to austerity, imposing 100+ % price increases in food, and offering foreign companies investment opportunities. Wage increases have been forcibly held to 30%. The long hand of world market forces is reaching everywhere.

Yet the response to austerity has frequently taken on a militant tone. Strikes, riots, demonstrations and mass lootings are greeting IMF-backed policies in many places. Even in social-democratic Denmark, the heartland of Scandinavian social consensus, half a million industrial and transport workers took the general strike route in late March, shutting the country down. In early April, workers attacked the parliament building, using mailboxes as battering rams. All over, the situation is likely to get hotter in the near future.

THIS spring's activities on the Cal campus brought out the best and the worst of local politics.

Many '60's era problems hatched like cicada bugs, dormant for seventeen years. Leadership battles, purges, paranoia, crazies, guilt—the devolution of years compressed into one sunny season movement.

The best, the energy, commitment and excitement, will stay with the thousands of participants. This is *empowering*. Most of them ignored the leaders, and decided for themselves how to solve the problems of a month long occupation. Sexism remains a major problem, as does the limited nature of the "single issue" movement.

To his credit, Savio advised the movement to form its own course. The would-be leadership remains, fighting over the entropic corpse of the spring movement. People will find other ways to express themselves.



Mario Savio, 1968

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Right Wing Fever

by Dan McGinty

Hmm...do you ever get the feeling that Americans are moving to the right? Like on Election Day last November, when Ronald Reagan won in 49 states — and carried 58% of the voters under 30 years old? How about when the U.S. Marines invaded and occupied Grenada in October 1983, and it seemed that almost nobody cared? And then there's the rise of the Moral Majority, the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, the preppy-yuppie upsurge, cutbacks in abortion funding, new anti-Mexican immigration measures — even the military-camouflage clothing trend.

Of course, only a monumental, precise, and probably costly research project could really determine if the general population of the United States has become more conservative in the last few years. All the same, it certainly feels like *something's* going on — that the "mood of the country" has shifted rightward.

But this means that millions of American men and women are acting against their individual self-interest, to use the Reagan presidential landslide as a major example. After all, voting for Reagan amounts to voting for eventually more inflation, social services cutbacks, industrial pollution, as well as the increased possibility of either a Nicaraguan or global-nuclear war. (Not that Waldo Mondale as President would have been the complete opposite of all this.) So *why* are people — both in the long run and in the short run — kicking themselves in the ass this way?

If you want to understand why people are doing what they're doing these days, don't overlook the writings of Wilhelm Reich, especially *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and

People in Trouble. In these two books Reich examines the breakdown of the workers' movement and the enthusiastic conversion of people from all social classes to fascism in Europe during the 1920's and 1930's (including the growth of "red fascism" — state capitalism and Party rule — in Russia at that time). These works are an excellent resource for comprehending humanity's acting irrationally on a mass scale.(1)

To read Reich is to notice the similarities between Germany in the years following World War I and the United States in the 1980's. Both eras came after a military defeat — for Germany, it included the humiliating Versailles Peace Treaty; for America, there was the retreat from Vietnam and the frustrating Iran hostage crisis of 1979-1980. There were and are economic troubles galore — inflation, unemployment, and the "proletarianization" of the so-called middle class (bankrupt small businesses, family farms going under, laid-off professionals). This bewildered and angry social class became the early electoral base of German fascism; the same thing occurred in Italy, Norway, Hungary, and Argentina.

Let's take a look at Ronald Reagan and his astonishing success among young people at the polls. True, Mr. Mondale was a pretty pedestrian fellow, but why did American youth (to the extent that they bothered to register and vote) jump for Reagan, the ultimate old fart? Wilhelm Reich knew the lives and problems of young people up and down — he spent years as a psychoanalyst, public sex-counselor, and German Communist Party activist. Even Nazi youth would come to him



with their sexual questions. He saw that those who rushed to join fascist organizations like the Stormtroopers or the League for German Girls were simultaneously expressing their urge to change their lives and their fear of true individual freedom. By joining a Nazi youth group, they were getting out of the house and rebelling against their parents; at the same time they were strengthening their emotional fixation on Hitler, an all-powerful father-Führer figure. Understanding this past fascist phenomenon can throw light on a related social trend today. Perhaps Reagan's particular appeal to young Americans is his current image (like Hitler's) of being a strong, self-confident adult, in complete control of his life and everything around him, who went out and got what he wanted. Isn't that something that everyone under 30 admires and would like to be — and thus vicariously could "become like Reagan" by voting for him?

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Reich analyzed the social figure he called "the strong man" — the uniformed cop and the fascist leader. He found, of course, that the "strong man's" authority only existed as long as the masses craved stern but somehow benevolent authorities that appear to take on the responsibility for maintaining social order. But he also noticed the ambivalent character of this desire for a dominating authority. He explains it in psychoanalytic terms as a typical child-parent (Oedipal) conflict; the discussion is involved but clearly written. People resent — indeed, sometimes hate — the police and the ruling politicians, but they also fear, envy, and (worst of all) follow them. Reich castigated the leftists' propaganda which portrayed heads of government and brutal police chiefs as powerful, evil men. This only strengthened the emotional power of these public authorities by implanting feelings of inferiority and helplessness in the population.

Anyone doing agitational work these days should reflect on this lesson in social psychology; painting Reagan, the CIA, and Latin American dictators as towering demons is going to be counter-productive. This approach merely lets frightened little men and women feel morally superior to the big bad reactionaries — it doesn't empower people as positive individuals at all, but only fuels their resentfulness.

The Mass Psychology of Fascism and *People in Trouble* contain more insights into conservative thought and behavior. Racism and anti-Semitism are shown to feed off sexual misery; the image of the "dirty Jew" and the "greedy Jew" is tied in to both sexual inferiority feelings and confused anti-capitalist sentiments among the proletariat. Movements against abortion and teenage contraception, the accompanying idealization of motherhood, and the boosting of the family as the "moral unit of society" are exposed as having *desexualized womanhood* for both their support and goal. And feelings of low individual self-esteem find compensation within the sphere of politics with emotional props like "national honor" and "the greatest country in the world".

If a future fascist-style movement (as Reich defines it) were to succeed in the U.S., it would have to incorporate anti-"big business" rhetoric, sadistic patriotism, and racial supremacy. Its Leader would probably com-

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From *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*:

"At the time when this book was originally written, fascism was generally regarded as a 'political party' which... 'introduced' fascism by force or by 'political manoeuvre'. Contrary to this concept, my medical experience with individuals from all kinds of social strata... showed me that 'fascism' is only the politically organized expression of the average human character structure... It is the mechanistic-mystical character of man in our times which creates fascist parties, and not vice versa....

"Fascism as a political movement differs from other reactionary parties in that it is supported and championed by masses of people....

"Fascism is not, as is generally believed, a purely reactionary movement; rather, it is a mixture of rebellious emotions and reactionary social ideas." [Introduction]

* * *

"Fascism, we are told, is the archenemy of religion, and a regression to paganism. On the contrary, fascism is the extreme expression of religious mysticism. As such it appears in a specific social form. Fascism is based on that religiosity which stems from sexual perversion; it changes the masochistic character of the old patriarchal religions into a sadistic religion. It transposes religion from the 'other-worldliness' of the philosophy of suffering to the 'this-worldliness' of sadistic murder." [Introduction]

* * *

"In Soviet Russia, the alleged acropolis of Marxism, there is no trace of a 'socialization of the means of production'. The Marxist parties had failed to distinguish 'socialization' from *nationalization*... The state factories are in no way at the disposal of the workers, but of groups of government officials. The socialization of the means of production will not be possible until the masses of the working people become structurally capable of administering it..."

"The capitalistic system continues to exist in Russia. And it will continue to exist as long as the masses of people continue to lack responsibility and to crave authority." [Introduction]

* * *

"It was... party-political Marxism which no longer had anything to do with Marx's scientific sociology and which is in no small part responsible for fascism. Marx knew what he was talking about when he said he was 'not a Marxist'.... The [Marxist] politicians have forgotten what was the goal of the founders of socialism: the abolition of politics and the kind of state which stemmed from it. It is painful to be reminded of this fact." [Chapter X]

bine the features of the all-wise, all-powerful Reagan with the popular demagoguery of George Wallace during his 1968 and 1972 Presidential campaigns.(2)

Over and over again, Reich articulates his conclusion that "work democracy" (his term for post-capitalist, non-authoritarian society) can only be attained when the masses of the people become individually and collectively responsible for their own lives. In *People in Trouble* he declares that "politics in itself is entirely irrational and a social disease"; the point is to find and build the organizational form for social transformation that goes beyond politics. People have to stop disowning their power to totally remake society to the political functionaries of either a leftist-bureaucratic movement (whom Reich calls "the freedom peddlers") or a right-wing "save the Nation" crusade.

NOTES

(1)*The Mass Psychology of Fascism* was first published in Germany in 1933; the revised and enlarged American translation appeared in 1946. *People in Trouble* was mostly written during 1936-37 and was published in 1953. Both books are currently available in paperback. The best short introduction to Reich so far is the article "Wilhelm Reich" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, a standard reference work.

(2)The paranoid racial propaganda world be semi-subtle and focused on an assortment of foreign and domestic groups: "OPEC millionaires" (meaning, dirty Arabs and Iranians), "cheap immigrant labor" (the Mexicans in southern California and the Southwest), the "liberal media" (sneaky Jews), and the usual "welfare chiselers" and "professional criminals" (the blacks).

(3)Wilhelm Reich's writings, like anyone's, need to be read with a critical eye. For example, in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* he bends over backwards to present V. I. Lenin as a "genuine democrat" who fought tooth and nail against any hierarchical and bureaucratic tendencies in the Bolshevik government. In *People in Trouble* Reich assumes that all collective radical activity is doomed to end up as "political": internally hierarchical, externally manipulative, and fettered by ideology. But on the whole these are exciting, penetrating books.



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From *People in Trouble*:

"No oppressor has any idea why he advocates 'morality for the people'. Nor do the police, the clergy or the district attorney. Sexual ideology has assumed its own lawfulness, has become a material power independent and separated from its origin. Moreover, the people themselves, as a result of organic pleasure anxiety, firmly maintain it and perpetually reproduce it." [Chapter V]

* * *

"My first deep impression of the gap between politics and practical knowledge was gained while soliciting farmers [in the early 1930's]. [A German Communist Party] functionary had described the advantages of Soviet agricultural collectivization very well, but received an embarrassingly negative response. One farmer, who had been listening quietly, took a handful of grain out of his pocket, held it under the functionary's nose, and asked him, 'What is this?' The function-day." [Chapter VI]

* * *

"The subjectively aroused, revolutionary [German] masses were, for the most part, following Hitler because they wanted an upheaval but, at the same time, feared genuine revolution. Hitler freed them from the responsibility for their own fate with which they had been burdened by the German revolutionary movement. 'Hitler can—and will—do everything for us,' they said. He was able to do everything, and accomplished unbelievable feats, because he was aided by mass fear of revolution. Simultaneously, he provided illusory satisfaction for the people's revolutionary, anti-capitalistic, and socialistic yearnings. It was impossible for German Socialists to see such contradictions. They believed that if economic exigency alone motivated the desires and actions of the working class, then the people could not help but want social revolution and could not simultaneously fear it." [Chapter VII]

* * *

"Against my better judgment, I myself clung fast to the organization to which I had belonged and for which I had fought, [the German Communist Party]. The party became my second home, and it becomes a second home for all who renounce bourgeois security in favor of the struggle for a better future. For many, it becomes the *only* home because they lose sight of the goal beyond. This destroys the organization and transforms it into an apparatus." [Chapter VII]



Prime Meat at the Fairmont

Rich people and their social rituals are often depicted by the media with a great deal of awe. They wear beautiful clothes, hang out in beautiful places, and throw great parties the rest of us never get invited to, so we're told. Frankly, I find the rich and their life-styles pretty disgusting.

Take the Debutante Ball, for example. It's a formal "coming-out" party, held annually, where young women from wealthy families make their "debut" by perpetuating the ruling class tradition known as 'money meets and mates with money.' The girls are chosen for their "proper mentality," reported the *San Francisco Examiner* (December 23, 1984). This means that "their parents have to be able to afford it . . . We want student leaders, not girls on drugs," according to Mrs. Robert Wall, one of last year's organizers of the Contra Costa County debutante show-off at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco.

You might ask why this spectacle of dead fur, silk, satin, diamonds and other opulence would interest people like us? Do we envy the rich? Hell, no, we just wanted to use the occasion to let them know what we really think of them.

The idea to disrupt this event originated in the mind of a dishwasher, who was fed-up with scrubbing stacks of greasy dishes and slimy floors for the low-life pay of \$4 an hour while his boss, the restaurant owner, was getting rich off his labor and those like him. Who knows, maybe someday the boss's daughter might become a debutante.

It occurred to the dishwasher that a few people get rich from the labor of those who have to work. Because these assholes control the means of social production (factories, mines, hotels, etc.), they also control large

portions of our lives and make many decisions which affect our very survival. They can hire and fire us, put us to work in unsafe, life-endangering conditions, dump toxic chemicals in our backyards, and psychologically manipulate us into believing that happiness comes out of a Coke machine. And if we get out of control - their control - they can call on the government - their government - to bust our heads and provide the right justifications. Anyone who has ever been on strike knows which side the police are on and whose "law" it is. Workers everywhere face similar problems, although in third world countries, the exploitation, profit, and sometimes death rate is even greater. A recent example is the Union Carbide poison gas massacre in Bhopal, India. It was a tragedy but no accident!

So it seemed like a good idea to confront the rich and tell them to their faces what we think of them. Our intention was not so much to "attack" the rich as individuals but rather their role in the system which produced and perpetuates a class society where the oppression of many at the bottom benefits the few on top.

The other aspect of the Deb affair we couldn't stomach was its implicit sexism. To this day, women are still regarded as "property" to be dressed up, paraded around and "sold" like commodities.

So on December 22, in front of the la-di-da Fairmont Hotel, the rich were treated to a rare encounter of class conflict. As they arrived for their "premier black-tie event," they were greeted with highly-spirited social commentaries like "Rich people are parasites!", "Rich people are disgusting!", "You can't argue with suck-cess!" One finered matron retreated in horror when she was spotted by a

punk woman with blue hair who yelled, "Mother! Don't you recognize me?"

The ruling class reacted to this unpleasant surprise in a number of ways. They tried the old "If you ignore them they'll go away" routine: avoidance - one well-decked woman stopped dead in her Gucci heels and said to her husband, "George, I think we should turn around"; some were even capable of articulate come-backs like "Get lost!" and "Scum!" But the one thing they never forget is that the State is there to protect them. So the cops arrived to guard the hotel's entrance like faithful bull-dogs, with their paddy wagons waiting to round us up at the slightest provocation.

A quick glance at the official "Cotillion" guest list of the debes and their escorts revealed the kind of sterling breed the ruling class reproduces to keep us in our place: Randolph "never worked a day in his life" Bennington, Abigail "wants to marry a European prince" Cravens, Edward "is there life below \$100,000?" McClone, Madeleine "learned to curtsey after three finishing schools" Kirkpatrick.

As the 19 debutantes were curtseying in their born-again virginal white gowns (price tag: \$500-\$1,500) inside the Fairmont, outside on the sidewalk we held an "Anti-Cotillion" of about 60-70 non-guests - anarchists, wage slaves, punks, squatters, street people and the "Scum of the Earth", a women's group in San Francisco who had organized the demonstration.

Catching the festive mood of the raucous evening, we belted out one anti-Xmas carol after another. "Jingle Bells" was transformed

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Prime Meat continued

into a riproaring call for "Anarchy, Anarchy, Anarchy's for me! Oh what fun it is to throw the state into the sea!"

The police, lacking their usual stimuli of crunching bones and clubbing heads, were fading fast, so we livened them up with everybody's favorite: "I'm dreaming of a White Night riot...where the cop cars are burning..."

After a while, we headed for Macy's, still open for last-minute shoplifting. Our new audience of shoppers and salespeople responded with a mixture of amused applause, bewilderment, and "Who are these weirdos?" After wishing one and all a merry shoplifting season, we proceeded with a singing tour of the Emporium.

There, we were met with similar responses and a 300-lb. psychopathic security guard, who doubled as a moving blockade to our friendly procession.

His only communication to us was "Shut up!" When it became clear that he was dying to throw one of us over the escalator, we decided to skip the encore and hastily exited.

The grand finale brought us inside the Sheraton Hotel, where San Francisco's high-society debutantes were also having a ball. As our motley crew marched through the carpeted lobby, one uppity-class woman who saw us coming rushed back inside one of the ballrooms and bolted the doors. It felt like a milder version of the Storming of the Winter Palace. Then, at last, we encountered a group of startled debutantes and their escorts who stared at us in disbelief. As we sang the proletarian version of "Joy to the World", their initial paralysis and fear gave way to relief and amusement. Some of them even smiled and applauded when the song ended. In their insulated world, they found it charming that the slum children had come uninvited to serenade them. At that moment, we burst out of control spontaneously, outrageously, with anger, disgust, profanity and declarations— "You are the real parasites!", "We won't fight anymore in your dirty wars!", "Fuck you, Rich Daddy!" We became their worst nightmare come true.



They yelled "Get out of here!" as we strolled out the front door. In that moment of gut-level social interaction, we experienced the kind of reality TV can never provide.

The media dutifully reported a few days later that debutante balls are "back in fashion." So we hope, are guillotine parties and class war.



"That's the beauty of America—anything sells here . . ." (A Channel 4 Television broadcaster, San Francisco, March 1, 1985)

Five-finger Discount

In the world we live in—bourgeois civilization, capitalism—things are more important than people, and people are just things selling their time and activity, buying and selling things. A terrible way of living altogether. This world of us commodity is made to appear natural and unavoidable by its entire plastic culture, its mutant values endlessly reproduced and violently enforced by all governments armies and cops. You will never win the lottery, and even if you did you would soon discover that there's no free human life at the end of that long paved driveway.

But this barbaric world of commodity exchange is often rejected by pissed-off proletarians. As Harry Cleaver noted in *Reading Capital Politically*: "Among those hardest hit by rising prices and most available there has been a militant direct action to counter the inevitable reduction of their income. They have passed from anger to direct appropriation and violent protest. Throughout the United States, business losses (and working class gains) from shoplifting have been rising steadily as more and more of the lowest paid workers refuse to pay the rising prices. In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, stealing (sic) from the state has continued to grow. In places as diverse as Turin,

Italy and Crystal City, Texas, workers have refused to pay rising gas and electricity bills and have practiced what has become known as the "self-reduction" of prices. Ripping off Ma Bell has become a widespread practice in the United States."

This doesn't mean we think of a social revolution as just being one grand act of shoplifting. There are real limits to a "five finger discount." Poor people often shoplift TV dinners, junk food, or lost TV sets, seizing things according to the false needs of the consumerist logic and commodity culture that ensures our enslavement to the dictatorship of things over people. And a resistance of one individual against the system is at best easily isolated, and can lead to the victimization, arrest, and death of the one who goes "shopping without money." Governments the world over use tactics like inflation to attack the working class (lowering the exchange value of our money without increasing our wages). Likewise, tactics like shoplifting, "cheating," from bosses and merchants express people's *unconscious* tendency to go beyond the limits of the system based on money and the market.

These acts are individual, isolated expressions of the breakdown in capitalist relations

that occurred on a widespread basis in the "anti-commodity" riots in U.S. inner cities in the 1960's and in New York City during the night of July 13-14, when massive electrical power outages caused looting so widespread that it was termed a "Black Christmas" by subversive and shakespeareans alike. Widespread looting has often occurred as part of direct attacks against capitalist regimes in Poland in 1970 and 1976, in Egypt in 1977, all over Britain in 1981, and in Tunisia, Morocco, and Brazil in 1983.

Remember too, a commodity is not an object, but a *social relation*, a situation where human beings organize their activity and things around them through buying and selling. Looting overcomes this, if only on the level of distribution of the means of production. The "Black Christmases" and direct seizures mentioned in this article express ways that people like you and me act against the declining society around us. Our purpose is not to celebrate their limits but to go beyond them, beyond the free appropriation of a single loaf of bread or record album to the looting of armories in insurrections, to the conscious and international appropriation of all aspects of our lives and of the world around us in world-wide revolution. In Italy, they call looting and "five-finger discount" "pillaging" because conscious class rebels know that wealth in this society has been created by working-class people, that it rightfully belongs to all of us as a class, so any goods we want to take or destroy are ours to be had.

Don't wait until we destroy the government; don't let any social workers or Salvation Army-types guilt-trip you out of what should be yours. Go ahead, take it! Self-help means: Help yourself!

WANT TO SEE MORE OF THIS?

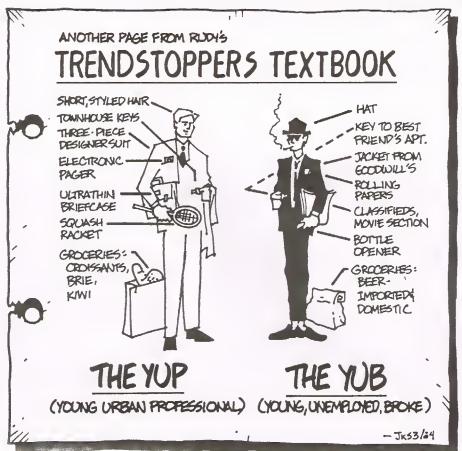
So do we—that's why we keep putting our issues of *The Daily Battle*. And it's always free—we just leave stacks of them around the Bay Area wherever people hang out...bookstores, Mexican restaurants, BART commuter trains, frozen yogurt joints, and laundromats. Simply giving it away is always less trouble than selling ads and keeping track of retail sales.

Before each issue goes to press, we staff members get together, we all our spare money, figure out how many copies we have in the issue and how many copies we can afford to print, and then print just that many. The *Battle* really has been "financed" in this manner since it started, and now for the first time we are asking everyone who enjoys reading us to do a little bit of the same.

Just put your right hand in your back pocket and pull out whatever amount you like. \$5 would plenty OK. We can't promise that we'll name the new wing of the Reich-Engels Institute after you, but we'll make sure that if you do make a contribution, we'll mail you a copy of each new issue as it happens.

Send cash or checks to:

The Daily Battle
2000 Center St., #1200
Berkeley, CA 94704





Big Brother continued from page 1

approach failed in the 60's when it collided with the realities of Vietnam, Civil Rights, widespread poverty, and the just plain boredom underlying most of daily life (even when you reached the level of "material success"). Attempts to ridicule the counterculture and anti-war opposition only spread the rebellion, which looked far more like fun and felt more real than what was considered normal.

In response, the media managers adopted a different strategy, and up until now it has worked. It boils down to complementing the mainstream diet with side dishes of acceptable deviance. Conformity, previously offered only in black and white, now comes in many colors and designs, including approved styles of "non-conformity." Pseudo-hippies appear in pickup truck ads, while teens with quasi-Mohawks model for Macy's.

Like the counterculture (see *The Daily Battle*, Fall '84), the political end of the 60's movement was phased out by the use of selective absorption into the mainstream. Unable to hide social problems and protests, the media began to seek out and publicize them. But "responsible" opposition elements—those whose ideas and methods could be incorporated into the machine without altering its basic functioning—were differentiated from "unconstructive extremists", and urged to take their cases through established channels.

The anti-Vietnam War movement began with strong tendencies toward a mass, "grass-roots" structure and autonomy from

established leftist groups. Many of its activists pushed for directly democratic decision making within their organizations, and searched for the causes of war within the capitalist social structure. But instead, we ended up with "peace" politicians and their hordes of campaign workers, tiny sects fighting over the correct line and terrorist sideshows like the Weather Underground. Added later were an anti-nuclear weapons movement whose moralistic appeal found a response primarily with professionals, and a stew of anti-interventionist, hierarchical, pro-Third World liberation campaigns, each with its own exclusive issue, yet all appealing to guilt and pushing self sacrifice for the great cause.

Blacks, women, gays and members of other groups facing discrimination were diverted from potentially challenging the very notion of hierarchy (a viewpoint which was a feature of the early women's affinity groups) into a fight for equal opportunity within the corporate-state structure. The ecology movement, initially characterized by direct action and the implicit questioning of production based on profit, evolved into a multitude of conventional political action units, aspiring eco-capitalists, and neighborhood groups which lobby for new regulations. A potentially generalized opposition movement thus broke up into separate, often competing interest groups working within the system.

Media coverage of social problems and pseudo-solutions has set the context for social activity, and has helped the media recover its

pre-Vietnam image as the guardian of the public interest and the source of objective truth. So, we are shown the poor and homeless, along with church, corporate and private charity efforts meant to help them become "productive citizens." We are told of spreading acid rain, workplace dangers and toxic chemical hazards, as well as programs to clean up the environment. The teenage suicide epidemic is lamented, but then we're informed about parents who organize to provide teens with love and meaning. Your local media outlet has a consumer affairs bureau to help those stuck with shoddy commodities and high utility bills. Dire warnings of increasing centralization within the marketplace and the perils faced by small business follow modern Horatio Alger stories; there's room at the top, they're telling you still.

Government corruption and irresponsiveness is regularly exposed. Excessive military spending has now become a regular feature on the evening news. Global tension spots blow up and dim out in an endless blurry parade running across our field of perception. We're subjected to endless speculation regarding a nuclear Armageddon, yet are supposed to be reassured by arms-control talks and peace initiatives. Social ills are, of course, presented as essentially unconnected problems which are solvable within the system (write your legislator, file a suit) or as regrettable by-products of a basically good society, one which is or-

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dained by human nature, and is therefore unalterable. If you don't like it, look how much worse it is in the Soviet Union, India, Ethiopia, South Africa, Brazil...take your pick.

To top it all, intense coverage of social problems, without an analysis which draws connections between the events, leads more to despair than enlightenment. Many viewers, after seeing their 15th bank crisis special, chemical disaster story or nuclear war movie, decide their sanity can only be preserved through numbness. Turn off when watching the news, or, better yet, stop watching, reading, discussing...

The media caters to this attitude by trivializing the news with human interest stories and pseudo-news. After all, coverage, or lack thereof, decides what's news. Why bother talking about world-wide strike waves, the daily boring day grind, or the wages system, when you have spectacular disasters, Michael (or Jessie) Jackson, Trivial Pursuits, elections, Summits and the Superbowl?

Thanks to such dis-information, people tend toward an even more schizophrenic view of reality. A typical perspective is "Not only is life good and getting better, things could fall apart at any second, and, because of human nature, probably will. So go along with the flow, keep your head above water, fight for your share, be thankful you live in America and are not 'truly needy', and enjoy it while it lasts." In a recent Gallup Poll, over 60% indicated they didn't believe any president could solve the deficit problem, yet most believed

the "economy," that mysterious creature which governs our lives, will get better. As things drag on, some people look upon impending disasters with morbid excitement.

Many activists have gotten frustrated with the lack of real change, are fed up with the Left's hierarchic, manipulative and sacrificial features, and are disillusioned by the realities of the supposed Soviet-Chinese-Nicaraguan alternative. They have generally returned to the normal mode, properly cynicized. They offer one more bit of supposed evidence that "rebellion" is out as a realistic alternative. The remaining opposition is content to play a caricature role. It engages in ritualistic, self-policed demonstrations, pre-planning its civil disobedience with the cops. Swarms of politicians, leftist cadre and priests stand ready to descend on any new autonomous social initiative and usually succeed in diverting it into safe channels.

The accepted opposition still urges involvement on the basis of guilt over the lot of this week's officially oppressed group — rarely if ever on behalf of one's own interest. This, in spite of the fact that the vast majority of us have a direct (even if unconscious) interest in total social transformation. To believe "progressives," one might think Americans have it well off, and need only generalize their situation to make this a better world.

The Left bores people. In a reverse of the 60's, it makes conformity look attractive. It is increasingly integrated into the Democratic Party. Tom Wicker of the *N.Y. Times* sees a future role for the Democrats as the "party of access" for "legitimate" interest groups, while the G.O.P. governs.

Nevertheless, genuine rebellion persists. During the 1984 Democratic Convention in San Francisco, a parking lot enclosed by wire fences (available by reservation only) was set off as an official demonstration zone; many groups used it for their rituals. Yet others, such as the group conducting a "tour" of corporate contributors to the Democrats, squatters, punx, hippies attempting to sleep in Golden Gate Park and other malcontents, took their case outside the official zone. This was repeated last November, when San Francisco demonstrators greeting Secretary of War Weinberger refused leftist monitoring efforts. In a Berkeley march protesting the invasion of Grenada, some participants ignored the pleas of monitors, blocked a major intersection, and burned money. In Zurich, Switzerland, advocates of an autonomous youth center appropriated film from a CBS *60 Minutes* crew doing a story on them, and sold the crew a film of the event which they shot themselves. One way to deal with media co-optation.

A genuine social alternative must meet two needs. It must articulate desires, such as the abolition of the wages system and alienated work, which cannot be satisfied by improved management, by mere tinkering. And its methods must empower the participants, so they can move in the direction of direct decision-making about their own lives and generalized self-management of a transformed society. Any movement lacking in either category can and will be turned into another of the Big Show's soap operas, to be cancelled when no longer fashionable. Now more than ever, the revolution will not be televised. •

Invisibles continued from page 1

but the City Council gave them two months. Minimal services such as water and sewage were promised for free, but that has also changed. To make things worse, there now seems to be a battle of jurisdiction over the site, with at least three different agencies claiming the right to evict the settlement. The distance between the ballot box and the policeperson's baton has grown a little shorter.

The liberal Berkeley Citizens' Action group, again in the majority in the council, already has one black eye when it comes to the homeless. They have evicted squatters from abandoned, City-owned houses. The bitter struggle cast the liberals in the role of landlords.

The larger question of what to do with people for whom there are no programs, who the system can't possibly employ at a profit, and who refuse to remain "invisible" has never been answered. In one "flight of fancy," the Roosevelt administration even studied colonizing Mars and Venus with the dispossessed. (*S.F. Chronicle*, 1-14-84 p. 10).

The problem has been around since Roman times. Back then, new agricultural production relations forced huge numbers of independent farmers into the cities, the first "proletarians." Various bread and circus programs were tried. Rome fell anyway. Beginning in the 12th Century, the Enclosure process in England moved thousands of

formerly independent farmers into towns when common lands were fenced in by the landlords. The response of the Crown, especially during Elizabeth's reign, was to make vagrancy a capital crime. Many thousands were executed. Later such people were "transported" to the colonies, Australia and Virginia among them. One very unsettling solution has been proposed. Self organized camps like the Rainbow settlement are too visible for middle class eyes. So why not find a space in the hinterland where they could be

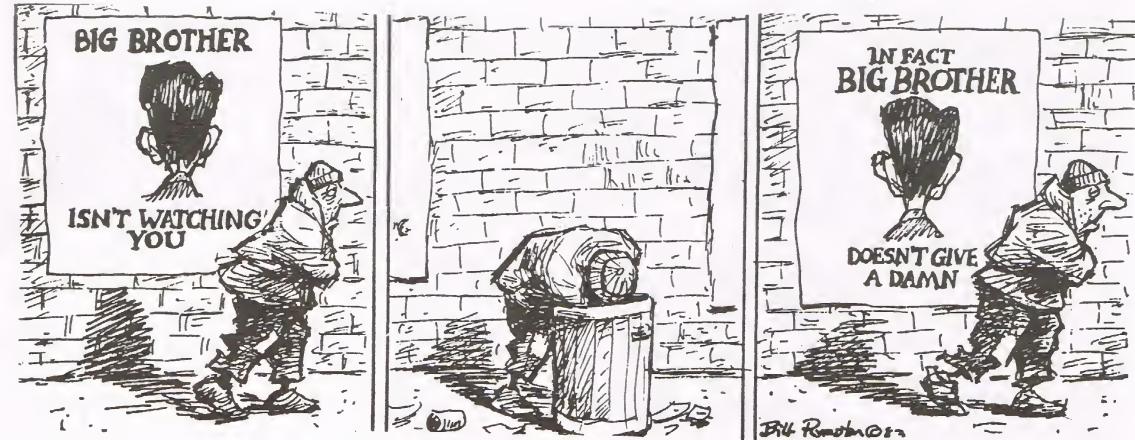
settled and watched? This is the plan of the Salvation Army-Alameda County welfare dept. Poor people were to have been moved to Camp Parks in Pleasanton, a site some say was contaminated from radiation experiments.

As of press time there has been no solution proposed.

The liberal City Council has found

the time to declare Berkeley a sanctuary for Central American refugees. Perhaps there's another site at the dump? •





I.

I was once
encountered by a pirate ship
captained by a
serious merchant
who wanted to know
under which
colors
I flew.

A darkness had
settled over the
harbor
and every shade
of every color
took one of the sixteen
shades of black
silhouetted
by more than
the moon,
but what?

I stood alone
in the dark quiet
and calmly hoisted
a black flag
the red did not show
I traveled alone.

Are you a Gunner?
Merchant?
Transport?"
He called.
I lied
not for the sake
of honesty
but for survival
I called out
Merchant.

That card
held a two-edged sword.
Merchants sometimes
support their own;
usually they challenge.
Competition cannot
give breaks
and still win,
for according to
popular belief
Winning is everything

Thus I gave the merchant
the chance to
come in close
board me
bind me
loot me
burn me.
All this gleamed
across the distance.

But within
fifty feet
my gun ports
uncovered.
My cannon
rolled forth.

Flash!
Rolled back.
Rolled forth.
Flash!
He called for my name.
And in between
Flashes
I yelled, "Saboteur!"

And in a flash
he understood the Red and the Black.

II.

Looking
Staring
Comprehending
the smashed toy
The man
asked
a question
"Was it worth
the smashing?"

The little girl
looked up
down
at the man
and asked
a Question
Can a toy
cause pain?
enslave?
kill?

The man
looking
at the
smashed
fetish
replied,
"It is only
a
toy
cash register
and
play
cash."

The little girl
replied
You see my point.



Striking:

Cal, '85



STRIKERS' MANIFESTO

Strike for the eight demands. Strike because you hate cops. Strike because your roommate was clubbed. Strike to seize control of your life. Strike to become more human. Strike to return Paine Hall scholarships. Strike because there's no poetry in your lectures. Strike because classes are a bore. Strike for power. Strike to smash the Corporation. Strike to make yourself free. Strike to abolish ROTC. Strike because they are trying to squeeze the life out of you. Strike. From posters nailed up around the Harvard campus 1969

Harvard, '69



Seattle
General Strike, 1919



If by revolution is meant that a Great Change is coming over the face of the world, which will transform our method of carrying on industry, and will go deep into the very sources of our lives, to bring joy and freedom in place of heaviness and fear — then we do believe in such a Great Change and that our General Strike was one very definite step towards it.

Seattle Union Record, 1919